

Psychological Reconstruction of Afghan Child Soldiers: Trauma, Resilience, and Rehabilitation

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Abstract

The enduring victimization of Afghan children due to political trauma has persisted since the Cold War Era Soviet Invasion. The mind of the Afghan children has become immune to the graphic instances of the war that they need to go through a process of psychological reconstruction (a transition in the child's cognition). Moreover, the psychological subjugation of these children illustrated such events where children themselves become the weapons i.e. becoming child soldiers. Unfortunately, there has been a rise in the recruitment of the child soldiers ever since the Taliban took over in 2021. However, this research establishes its theoretical foundation through the application of Eric Erikson's Stages of Psychological Development in a child, by investigating the facets of political trauma faced by these Afghan child soldiers. Along with that their resilience to political trauma, and to look into the efforts regarding rehabilitation to understand the psychological reconstruction of these children is also the foundation of this research. Methodologically, this research incorporates qualitative method, notably content analysis, characterized by a descriptive and analytical orientation. The study adopted an interdisciplinary perspective, delving in the nuanced political contours that characterizes the experiences of child soldiers in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghan child soldiers, Political trauma, Resilience, Rehabilitation, Stages of psychological development

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1. Introduction

Afghanistan is a nation that has been impacted by a protracted conflict. The people of the state have been perpetually harmed by the ongoing political strife that has led to people, especially children being politically traumatized. From the Soviet invasion to the present situation, Afghan children have tolerated the political trauma, grappling with the enduring consequences of their wartime experiences. The very fabric of the Afghan society has been irrevocably altered by the involvement of the children in the theatre of war. The enduring victimization of Afghan children due to political trauma has persisted since the Cold War Era Soviet Invasion. The mind of the Afghan children has become immune to the graphic instances of the war that they need to go through a process of psychological reconstruction (a transition in the child's cognition). These children have borne the brunt of a conflict. This has led to the traumas inflicting their formative years and it has not only shaped their psyches but has also cast a collective shadow on the nation's future (Child Soldiers Global Report, 2001).

The current situation of Afghan child soldiers is dire, with both the pre-Taliban government forces and the Taliban recruiting and using children in combat and non-combat roles. The U.S. had provided military assistance subject to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act until the Taliban took control of the country in 2021. Efforts to combat this issue were made, but the recruitment and use of child soldiers increased after the Taliban's takeover. Based on the information provided, the current situation of child soldiers in Afghanistan is concerning. Both the Afghan government forces and the Taliban have recruited and used children in combat and non-combat roles. The U.S. had been providing military assistance subject to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, but this stopped after the Taliban took control of the country in 2021. The pre-Taliban Afghan government made efforts to address child protection, but the use of child soldiers increased after the Taliban takeover. The Taliban continue to recruit and use children without implementing measures to prevent this practice. (Afghanistan: Events of 2021)

This paper delves into the intricate nexus between psychological development and the persistent political turmoil that has molded the lives of Afghan children into becoming child soldiers. It embarks on the exploration of the connection that exists between the psychological development of Afghan child soldiers and the persistent political turmoil the Afghan children have gone through and it has become a defining pivot of their lives. The inquiry is framed within the context of Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development (Erikson, 1999). The theoretical lens explains the conjunction between individual identity formation and the social political milieu. The individual is the child in this equation whereas the social political milieu represents the ongoing rule of the Taliban in the conflictual situation. By engaging in a nuanced observation, this research aims to go through the dynamics of political trauma that impacts the behaviour pattern of the Afghan children who are triggered to become child soldiers. Delving into the multifaceted layers of this intricate relationship, it becomes apparent that the psychological development of advanced soldiers is not only the matter of an individual concern but also an upper tenant aspect of broader societal narrative. Beyond the intermediate challenges faced by these children, this research explores to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nuanced implications for the reconstruction and resilience of society which is grappling with the consequences of a protracted conflict.

Based on Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, this study aims to analyse the impacts of political trauma on the psychological development of children who were exposed to complicated military training and wars during their early years of life. This study will use a mixed method of combining rigorous descriptive and analytical perspectives while utilising qualitative procedures such as content analysis through an interdisciplinary lens of psychology and

politics. The aim of this methodological rigour is to understand the complex political landscape that has moulded the experiences of a grandchild soldiers. It becomes clear that the endurance of political trauma in the lives of Afghan children demands complete understanding of their psychological development. Through the integration of theoretical frameworks, rigorous methodologies, and an interdisciplinary approach, this research aims to illustrate the complexities that are present in the lives of the Afghan children who became soldiers. The insights gained from this research will be pertinent in playing the role in vast debates on trauma, conflict, and rehabilitation.

2. Research Methodology

The present research involves a qualitative research strategy, focusing on both description and analysis to gain insights of the experiences of Afghan child soldiers. The study methodologically explores written sources using content analysis to understand the experiences regarding political trauma, resilience, and rehabilitation. Understanding and acknowledging the interdependence of politics and psychology, and interdisciplinary approaches is taken into consideration guaranteeing a comprehensive investigation of the political facets concerning these Afghan children who became soldiers. This study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these Afghan child soldiers by dismantling conventional disciplinary boundaries and providing explanation that closes the knowledge gap between psychological development and socio-political settings especially when it comes to children.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory of Eric Erickson regarding Psychosocial Development is a comprehensive framework which encapsulates the stages an individual has to go through in their life. The theory focuses on the psychological development and the social environment that the individual faces from childhood till adulthood. Erickson identifies eight stages in which each phase is shaped by a psychosocial crisis or conflict that an individual must navigate through healthy development. These stages span from infancy to old age while concentrating on each struggle the individual faces. Here is an overview of each phase:

1. *Trust vs. Mistrust* (Infancy- 0 to 18 months): newborns learn during the first year of life whether to trust or mistrust their interactions. A successful resolution leads to the growth of trust which serves as the basis for next interactions.
2. *Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt* (Early Childhood- 18 months to 3 years): toddlers take ownership of their independence. Failure, at this point, leaves one feeling doubtful and ashamed while it creates a sense of autonomy and self-control.
3. *Initiative vs. Guilt* (Preschool- 3 to 5 years): kids begin to investigate their surroundings and show initiative. Bad experiences might cause remorse and lack of ambition whereas positive ones will foster a sense of purpose and initiative.
4. *Industry vs. Inferiority* (School Age- 6 to 11 years): children in school age concentrate on acquiring skills through socialization and education. A sense of industry and competence is gained from success in this stage whereas feelings of inadequacy may come from failure.
5. *Identity vs. Role Confusion* (Adolescence – 12 to 18 years): Adolescents try to define their identities clearly and experiment with various roles and career routes. Unresolved conflicts cause confusion about one's position in society but successful conflict resolutions lead to a strong sense of identity.

6. *Closeness vs. isolation* (Young Adulthood- 18 to 40 years): young adults have close significant connections with people. Intimate ties are developed when resolutions are successful and if they are not, the young adult is left feeling alone.
7. *Generativity vs. Stagnation* (Middle Adulthood- 40 to 65 years): Adults prioritize making contributions to the welfare of society and the next generation. A sense of generativity is the outcome of success in this stage, whereas a sense of purposelessness and fulfillment may arise from stagnation.
8. *Integrity vs. Despair* (Late Adulthood- 65 and over): people consider their life experiences. Healthy resolutions foster integrity and acceptance whereas unfulfilled goals and life issues can lead to despair (Syed & McLean, 2017).

The stages of psychosocial development by Eric Erickson provides an engaging theoretical framework for analysing the psychological development of the Afghan child soldiers who are caught up in the turmoil. According to this paradigm, people go through discrete phases that I characterised by psychological and social crisis that influence their identity and well-being. The application of Ericson's theory to the situation of Afghan child soldiers fits in their particular circumstances because it is able to gorge the severe impacts of the displacement and war. Reflecting on the long term and short-term impacts of their experiences, the core stages of trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, aren't initiative versus guilt can take on greater relevance (Munley, 1975).

The psychosocial stage of identity versus role uncertainty is a pivotal turning point in the psychological development of Afghan child soldiers when viewed in the framework of Erikson's theory. These people struggles with issues of identity, aim and a sense of belonging as they navigate through the difficulties of forming an identity absent the conflict that is ongoing. The hunt for identity is inextricably linked to the losses incurred by war. Beyond the personal experiences, the psychological impacts are present and they form the identity of a generation raised in a state of constant warfare. The implications of Erikson's theory become apparent as Afghan child soldiers traverse this crucial period, providing a framework to understand the complexities of identity building.

Moreover, the final stage of the theory holds a strong relevance for understanding the long-term psychological impact on Afghan Child soldiers as they transition onto adulthood. The residue of political trauma, experiences of war, and the complexities of reintegration from the backdrop which these individuals confront questions of purpose and legacy in their lives. The attainment of integrity, marked by a sense of wisdom and acceptance, contrasts with the specter of despair that look large for those grappling with unresolved psychological scars. Therefore, the theory offers a lens through which to examine the enduring consequences of political trauma on the psychosocial development of Afghan child soldiers, shedding light on the potent pathways towards resilience or despair (Erikson, 1999).

4. Literature Review and Discussion

4.1 Political Trauma Experienced by Afghan Children

Afghan child soldiers are embroiled in the tumultuous and protected conflicts that has marred the nation. They have been the betters of the political drama that has constructed their psyches and shape their developmental trajectories. This exploration into the political dimensions of trauma that they have endured is due to the in ideological indoctrination our long term consequences that echo through their social lives or the impact there social relations. The political dimensions of trauma experienced by Afghan child soldiers are intricate because they extend not only to physical ambit but also to the profound psychological scars that impact them (Ray, 2017).

At the heart of this trauma lies the erosion of trust in political institutions and societal structures. A child psychology is constructed in a way that they stop believing in institutions and are compelled to believe that they should make up an institution which would protect them. The disruption of their trust in the political order marks the betrayal of their safety and well-being and this lays the groundwork for a distorted worldview that permeates their psychosocial development.

The current scenario over Taliban are in control of Afghanistan iterates the same situation. The Taliban take advantage of this mistrust that has been inculcated within the minds of the children. The erosion of trust is further compounded by the loss of autonomy which is a crucial component of Erickson's second stage that is autonomy versus shame and doubt. Children are forced into the roles of soldiers, defying the conventional boundaries of childhood. Their autonomy is stripped away in the face of political forces behind their control i.e. Taliban. The interplay between political trauma and fundamental change challenges of identity formation during this stage sets the basis for complex cognition (O'Leary, 2018).

The exposure to political violence constitute the core facet of trauma which is endorsed by a one child soldiers. Beyond the immediate physical harm that they face lies the psychological toll of witnessing and participating in violent acts which become a defining feature of their lived experiences. Erikson's third stage initiative versus guilt becomes very imperative because it offers insights on the psychological impact when faced with such exposure. The guilt associated with these acts compelled by war becomes a burdensome psychological weight that they carry with the rest of their lives. Moreover exposure to political violence is also intertwined with the fourth stage which inculcates industry versus inferiority. The environment of conflict hampers the development of a sense of agency within the child. These children are thrust into the roles of violence and conflict which impedes the development of their healthy self-esteem and contributes to a sense of inferiority (Orang, 2023).

Very important dimension of political trauma is ideological indoctrination which frameworks the beliefs values and perceptions of the Afghan children. This is intact with the fifth stage of Eriksson psychosocial development which talks about how confusion is generated while accepting a particular identity. The clash between the development of coherent sense of self and the imposition of an external ideology creates a profound internal conflict. This struggle to reconcile individual identity with externally imposed rules and beliefs contributes to a pervasive sense of confusion and dissonance. The political indoctrination also intersects with it extends six stage which is intimacy versus isolation. For the Afghan children, the imposition of political ideologies can hamper the development of genuine intimacy and connection. The mistress ingrained through political drama becomes a barrier to forming meaningful relationships. These children perpetuate a cycle of isolation and their psychosocial development is hindered (Afghanistan: Little Help for Conflict-Linked Trauma, 2019).

The long-term consequences of political drama and of Afghan children are both individual and societal. The seventh stage, which is generativity versus stagnation resonates far beyond with the immediate context of conflict. This means that upon children have to bear the brunt of this situation later on in life as well. The disrupted psychosocial development which is marked by political trauma and confused identity formation can hinder their ability to contribute positively to society. This is the reason why most of Afghan children that are found are later on in life are following the same violent figures that they grew up with. The potential for generativity for leaving a positive legacy is impeded.

Furthermore, the erosion of trust in political structures and the perpetuation of ideological conflicts contributes to the stagnation of societal progress. This comes in live with the eighth stage

which is the final stage, integrity versus despair. The political drama experienced by an Afghan soldiers leave a mark on their perceptions of society and political order. For instance the current situation of the Afghan children is that they have no education as the schools I have been closed which means that they have no institution to follow which would later on teach them of how to maintain order. The potential for despair marked by a lack of faith in the political systems threatens to cast a long shadow over their adult lives (Qamar, 2022).

Therefore, the political trauma experienced by Afghan child soldiers is multifaceted and an enduring phenomenon that is intertwined with their psychosocial development. The social and political order that they are facing under the Taliban regime has a great impact on their soul psychosocial development. Using the error correction stages of psychosocial development as a conceptual framework that provides a nuanced understanding of the profound impact of political drama on trust, autonomy, initiative, identity, intimacy and generativity. The exploration of exposure to political violence and ideological indoctrination at a young age gives pathway to the complexity of their experiences. These young individuals tolerate political trauma and become resilient in the face of it. This resilience is not something to be appreciated as these young individuals face hindered psychosocial development admits the ongoing complexities of conflict environments.

4.2. Political Resilience in Afghan Child Soldiers

In the context of Afghan child soldiers, resilience refers to the capacity to endure, adjust to, and recover from severe political traumas engendered by the armed combat. It is more than just the ability to survive; it is the ability to flourish in the face of hardship. However, in the case of resilience of Afghan children, they become rather stagnant in the face of political trauma. It is a complex combination of psychological and social elements that contribute to resilience which is the ability to retain purpose an agency in the first of adversity. The Afghan child soldier becomes more grounded that while being resilient towards the political trauma, they lose their own identity and become homogeneous with the conflict that is occurring within their state. It is a continuous process rather than a static attribute that reflects the ability to become unanimous with the unstable political environments that influence their lives.

There are certain political factors that contribute to the resilience of a grandchild soldiers. Building and maintaining strong networks of political support is the foundation of political resilience. Full of long child soldiers, these networks are essential resources that includes social, family, and political ties. According to Eric Erickson psychosocial perspective, these networks correspond to the critical phases of autonomy, initiative and trust. For instance, the political order under the Taliban is interwoven with its people and children serve as the mean facet of dissemination of their message. Resilience is built on trust in these networks which are provided by people who instill a sense of stability and dependability. It is not worthy to point out that this stability independent ability does not exist within reality but rather it is something that is self-constructed so that the control of the minds is present. They create networks that provide people with political clout and provide them with sense of control over their circumstances which foster autonomy. These networks provide opportunities for political engagement and participation, while focusing on the undeveloped minds of the children (Boutin, 2014).

Examining the political narratives of on child soldiers reveal compelling stories of resilience that transcended confines of victimhood. These narratives serve as windows into the multifaceted dimensions of political resilience, illustrating their ways in which these young individuals navigate and shape their political identity's through trauma while becoming resilient in the face of conflict that they endure. They normalize this conflict that they have to go through

and that is how their identities are shaped. Resilience is inherently linked with the ability to adapt and for these Afghan children this adaptation takes on a political dimension. For instance starting from the Cold War, these Afghans had to face a change of rulers. Firstly, they saw a change from the Soviet invasion to the American invasion, and accepted their rule and adapted to it, showing resilience. In the current scenario, the Afghans saw a change from the American invasion to Taliban regime. The changes in rulers inculcated resilience in the mind-set of individuals, especially children.

Moreover, the narratives illustrate the role of political support networks in fostering resilience. In the face of communal challenges, familial, communal, and broader political affiliations emerged as critical pillars of support. The trust is established within these networks which become a beacon of resilience, enabling Afghan child soldiers to navigate through the complexities of political conflict landscape. The adaptive political strategies employed by these individuals as depicted in their narratives, a profound resilience. It extends generativity versus stagnation stage comes to life as these individuals contribute politically to their communities, advocating for, and actively participating in reconstruction of political landscapes. For instance, a lot of children came forth in recruiting as child soldiers especially within the regime of Taliban because they wanted to politically contribute to their society (Engeland, 2019).

The concept of political resilience in Afghan child soldiers envelopes are dynamic and a multifaceted process. It is nurtured through the cultivation of political support networks, the development of adaptive political strategies, and the crafting of narratives that agency and strength. These elements align with Eric Erickson's psychosocial stages and illustrate a unique political dimension of resilience in the lives of child soldiers. When one delves deeper into their narratives, it becomes crystal clear that the political resilience is not only a response to adversity but a transformative force that shapes their political trajectories of these individuals (children) or providing insights into the complex interplay of agency and psychosocial development.

4.3. Political And Ideological Influences of Afghan Child Soldiers: Navigating the Complex Nexus

The experiences of an Afghan child soldier are highly intertwined with the complex web of political and ideological influences. The complex web of politics and ideology strongly impacts the child's psychological well-being and challenging the integration of the child in the post conflict society. The exploration seeks to show the crucible of armed conflict. The psychological well-being of Ron child soldier is complicated and it is woven into the fabric of political and ideological factors that shape the child's worldview and perception. The political turmoil and the ideological indoctrination during the formative years deeply impact their psychological development which resonates with the Eric Erickson's psychosocial stages. In the context of trust versus mistrust, the foundation stage of Erikson's theory, the erosion of trust in political structures becomes a pertinent factor which impacts the psychological well-being of the child. The child's exposure to political violence at a young age catalyses the child to participate in armed conflict and the ideological indoctrination by the Taliban ruptures their trust in the institutions which is fundamental for the healthy psychosocial development. The consequences of the mistrust is pervasive anxiety, hyper-vigilance and challenges in forming securing relationships. The imposition of external political ideologies may contribute to identity confusion as individuals grapple with reconciling personal values with externally imposed roles and beliefs. There is a possibility that the political stigma attached to former child soldiers could obstruct the formation of strong social bonds and intimate relationships (Johnson, 2018). Politically biased society perspectives impede psychosocial growth and reinforce emotions of loneliness.

The process of political indoctrination of Afghan children is due to the socio-political challenges that extend well beyond the cessation of hostilities. Political stigma is an obstacle which is pertinent and an obstacle in the face of reintegration process and aligns with Erikson's sixth stage- intimacy versus isolation. The political stigma is intertwined with former child soldiers which may hinder their social growth. Therefore, these children become more gullible in the face of political Violence. Beyond the end of hostilities, there are numerous socio-political obstacles in the way of Afghan child soldiers' political reintegration. In this setting, political stigma is a persistent difficulty that impedes the reintegration process and corresponds with Erikson's sixth stage of closeness against isolation. The difficulties of political reintegration are exacerbated by community political perceptions. Social integration and acceptance may be hampered by the prejudice and judgement of society towards former child soldiers (Brown & Black, 2018).

The experiences of Afghan child soldiers are deeply intertwined with the complex web of political and ideological influences that leave an impact on their wellbeing. The strong ideological indoctrination by the Taliban is done due to the weak political order in the state. The children are physically and mentally vulnerable; therefore, they are easily manipulated and make obedient soldiers. The Taliban are easily able to coerce children to participate in combat and commit atrocities against civilians. The Taliban commanders not only utilize threats of violence against child soldiers but also against their families as well as the possibility of torture and death at the hands of the enemy. Human Rights investigated that Afghan child recruits are often compelled to physically punish and kill other soldiers including children. Child soldiers who refuse to obey these orders are severely beaten or threatened with execution. These horrible practices instill fear in the children and forewarn them if they try to disobey these orders.

For more than two decades, the Taliban have put the Afghan children on the frontier of Afghanistan's armed conflicts. They have used children as soldiers to plant and detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The concept of using children as suicide bombers and thousands of children are still in service of the Taliban's militia. The Taliban commanders have relied on Islamic religious schools to train young children as their soldiers. Boys as young as 6 were indoctrinated, and by the age 13, often have learned to use firearms. Children, aged from 13 to 17, are often used to fights with other parties in the conflicts. Previously, these children were used to fight the U.S. Afghan government and pro-government forces. The current scenario of Taliban's current efforts of establishing a government in Afghanistan has provided an opportunity for the international community to push for an end to end child recruitment, and for the release of children from Taliban forces (Becker, 2021).

When Afghan child soldiers transition into adulthood, the impacting pivots of political and ideological influences manifest in intricate ways. The erosion of trust in political institutions and the ideological indoctrination leads to a stunted psychosocial development. The transition to adulthood for Afghan child soldiers is fraught with unique political challenges that influence their psychosocial development. Erikson's seventh stage – generativity versus stagnation – becomes particularly relevant as these individuals grapple with the consequences of their political past and seek to contribute positively to society. The enduring impacts of political trauma, including political stigma and community perceptions, may impede the development of generativity, hindering their ability to establish meaningful connections and make long lasting positive contributions to their communities (Maree, 2022).

The political and ideological influences on the Afghan Child soldiers are multifaceted. Their psychological well-being and the challenges they faced during the political violence have caused a lot of issues in their reintegration and the transition to adulthood. Erikson's psychosocial

stages provides a comprehensive framework through which the nexus of politics and ideological indoctrination can be easily understood. The exploration of these influences extends beyond immediate post-conflict challenges, offering insights into the enduring consequences that persist into childhood. Therefore, the psychosocial development of Afghan child soldiers, it is evident and pertinent to understand that the nexus between ideology and politics are directly in tact with the psychosocial development of the Afghan children. Therefore, what is imperative here is the political and psychosocial rehabilitation of these young Afghan children, and to delve deep into the efforts of the international community to ensure the rehabilitation of these Afghan children.

4.4. Political Rehabilitation Programs for Afghan Child Soldiers: Navigating the Role of Political Education

Political rehabilitation is imperative in the sense to understand because resilience in the face of political violence can only be toned down through rehabilitation. When rehabilitation is made political, it means how certain international institutions and organizations can only advocate for practices of psychological reconstruction of children who have been through conflict. For instance, in Afghanistan, children who have been impacted by the violence and were recruited in the militia, they can be provided by aid which may be of psychological help and help their psychosocial development. Political education can be provided to children on grass root level and to the people with children so that their loved ones can be protected, and children who have already been impacted by war can be rehabilitated into normality and sensitized to violence (Menon & Arganese, 2007).

Political rehabilitation for Afghan child soldiers operate within the multifaceted framework, addressing both international and local political dimensions. International political initiatives play a pivotal role, often driven by global organizations and foreign governments seeking to aid in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers. These initiatives and programs are shaped by considerations and international norms which reflect upon broader commitment, addressing the consequences of armed conflict on children. Simultaneously, local political interventions form a core part of the efforts in rehabilitating these children. Local governance structures, grassroots organizations and community leaders should engage in political processes to create an environment conducive to rehabilitation of child soldiers. The collaboration between international and local political actors which reflect the complexity of navigating the political landscape for the effective rehabilitation of Afghan Child soldiers.

International political initiatives are often scrutinized for their endeavors for their ability to address the root causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace. The effectiveness of such initiatives may be measured by the degree to which they facilitate the political stability, empower local communities, and foster a sense of political agency among former child soldiers. Before the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, UNICEF was actively working with the government of Afghanistan to set up Child Protection Action Network (CPAN), a coalition of government departments, non-governmental organization, and community and religious leaders all working together to protect children's rights. Afghanistan as a state, before the Taliban took over, appeared on the Child State Protection Act (CSPA) since 2019. Unfortunately, the efforts of such international organizations and programs were only limited to supplying monetary aid (Unicef, n.d.).

Political education emerges as an important component in the rehabilitation pathway for Afghan child soldiers. The importance of political education lies in the potential to empower individuals with knowledge and necessary to navigate the line of complexities of conflictual political landscapes. The psychosocial framework by Eric Erikson's highlights political education

as a pertinent tool which can aid the process of defining identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, and generativity versus stagnation. Political education contributes to the resolution of identity versus role confusion by providing individuals to critically examine the political ideologies and make informed choices aligned with their personal values. It becomes a catalyst for the formation of a coherent political identity, enabling the child soldier to actively participate in shaping the political narratives of their communities (William 2020).

However, Afghanistan serves as a difficult state to administer in the sense that Taliban have shut down schools. These schools, which could have served as the most crucial aspect for rehabilitation which could have helped students to free students from political indoctrination. The freeing from political indoctrination could have freed the child from resilience, and most importantly, helped the child to reconstruct their own identity. Reconstruction of the child's psychology is only possible through education and political education can help the child to be free from political indoctrination. Conversely, Taliban have shut down schools; therefore, it is very difficult for local bodies to organize programs which would help in the psychological reconstruction of a child soldier.

The bleak situation highlights how international organizations and local organizations cannot help Afghan child soldiers until schools are allowed to function smoothly because the only pathway which would help a child soldier to formulate their own identity through psychological reconstruction is through education.

5. Conclusion

In efforts to understand the difficult and cumbersome journey of Afghan Child Soldiers, the nexus between political conflict and emotional development (that of a child) is vital to understand. These young children face extrapolated impacts from the exposure to protracted violence and ideological indoctrination. The child's ability to trust, to be independent, and to take an initiative is profoundly impacted during a conflict (especially like the one in Afghanistan). This nexus is proved by the synthesis of Erik Erikson's idea of psychosocial development which explains in depth how each stage of a child's psychosocial development is impacted by the ongoing conflict in the political milieu. Political support networks and adaptive strategies become lifelines, helping the insurgent group (Taliban in the case of Afghanistan) to navigate the manipulation of these children while instilling ideas such as the political institutes will not help; therefore, one should join the group for their own betterment.

The findings point us towards crucial areas for future exploration and action. There is dire need of deeper understanding how political trauma continues to impact the lives of Afghan children as their childhood transitions into adulthood. The exploration of long-term impacts provide a guideline to target the political systems which advocate for child soldiers. For instance, it brings the attention to the Afghan child soldiers who have been politically victimized and became politically resilient in face of the Taliban political order. In practical situations, educational programs play a pertinent role. Programs should be tailored in a way that they should offer knowledge and skills for active political participation. These programs can be used as a key to create and formulate respect, trust and understanding between the individuals and the institutions. There should be keen focus on creating sensitive programs that respect the individual's experiences and foster a shared understanding.

Political strategies should channelize a comprehensive approach. Collaborative endeavours which involve international and local stakeholders must address the immediate concerns along with establishing the foundation for the well-being of Afghan child soldiers. The multifaceted nature of reintegration of these child soldiers should be recognised in order to

contribute towards a long-lasting positive transformation. The process of rebuilding and reconstructing the Afghan child soldier's political and emotional perception requires continuous efforts and attention. It is a path marked by resilience, where the complexities of political landscape intertwined with individual narratives of development. It becomes crystal clear that the reconstruction of a grandchild soldiers' trance ends mere rehabilitation- it is a collective initiative to reshape the political landscape of a nation which has been marred by conflict. Their narratives offer insights into the impact of politics on the human spirit and the strength and individual possessive to reclaim their sense of purpose. In the journey for a more just and compassionate world, inspired by the experiences from Afghanistan, it is imperative to recognise their challenges but also strive towards creating political environments that foster resilience and promote understanding child soldiers.

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